

GREATER YELLOWSTONE INTERAGENCY BRUCELLOSIS COMMITTEE
Executive Committee Meeting Minutes
Bozeman, Montana
December 15 & 16, 1999

Executive Committee Present:

- Bill Daniels, Bureau of Land Management, Cheyenne, WY
- Arnold Gertonson, Montana Department of Livestock, Helena, MT
- Rube Harrington, USDA, APHIS, VS, Central Region, Arlington, TX
- Bob Hillman, Idaho State Department of Agriculture, Boise, ID
- Lonn Kuck, Idaho Department of Fish & Game, Boise, ID
- Skip Ladd, National Park Service, Denver, CO
- Jim Logan, Wyoming Livestock Board, Cheyenne, WY
- Pat Flowers, Fish Wildlife & Parks, Bozeman, MT
- Wayne Brewster, National Park Service, Denver, CO
- Larry Ludke, USGS, Denver, CO
- Tom Thorne, Wyoming Game & Fish, Cheyenne, WY
- Dan Huff, Fish & Wildlife Service, Denver, CO

Staff:

- Becky Russell, Wyoming Game & Fish Dept., Laramie, WY
- Denise Walters, Idaho State Department of Agriculture, Boise, ID

Attendees:

- Thomas Roffe, USGS/BRD National Wildlife Health Center, Bozeman, MT
- Steve Torbit, National Wildlife Federation, Boulder, CO
- Robert Hendry, Wyoming Stockgrowers Assn & Rancher, Lysite, WY
- Jeanne-Marie Souvigney, Greater Yellowstone Coalition, Livingston, MT
- Lance Brower, University of Idaho, St. Anthony, ID
- Thomas Linfield, Montana Dept. of Livestock, Helena, MT
- Wilber W. Clark, USDA, APHIS, VS, Helena, MT
- L. Mark Stewart, Wyoming Livestock Board, Cheyenne, WY
- Caroline Kennedy, Defenders of Wildlife, Wash DC
- Lloyd Dorsey, Wyoming Wildlife Federation, Jackson, WY
- Tom Bills, USFS, Bridger-Teton National Forest, Jackson, WY
- Glen Plumb, National Park Service-Yellowstone National Park, WY
- Cindy Gaborick, USDA, APHIS, VS, Boise, ID
- Jerome Lawther, National Wildlife Federation, Boulder, CO
- Michael Scott, GYC, Bozeman, MT
- Jon Catton, GYC, Bozeman, MT
- Karen Kovacs, Department of Interior
- Don Woerner, DVM, Laurel, MT
- Steven Olsen, USDA, ARS, NADL, Ames, IA
- Jack Rhyan, USDA, APHIS, VS

- Connie Schmellik-Sandage, CVB, Ames, IA
- Tim Short, US Forest Service, Jackson, WY
- Larry Dove, BLM, Cheyenne, WY
- John Chatburn, ISDA, Boise, ID
- Ryan Clarke, USDA, APHIS, VS, Billings, MT
- Flo Gardipel, Buffalo Field Campaign, Townsend, MT
- Terry Kreeger, Wyoming Game & Fish, Wheatland, WY

Chairman Bob Hillman called the meeting to order. Introductions of members were made and guests were recognized.

Adjustments were made to the agenda due to delays of members getting to the meeting. May provide public comments today rather than tomorrow. Public was advised that they must sign in prior to public comment period.

Chairman Hillman made a request for members and guests to sign in and for updated information of phone numbers and addresses.

OLD BUSINESS

An apology was made for no typed minutes of the September Meeting.

Status of YNP/MT Bison Management Plan/EIS

Wayne Brewster- The goal of the planning process was to develop an EIS for management of bison in Yellowstone that had a dual goal of protecting a wild free ranging bison population and address the risk of transmission of brucellosis to cattle and protect the cattle industry of Montana. The draft EIS was sent out last summer for public comment, which closed last November, just a little over a year ago. That draft had 7 alternatives with a range from and aggressive test and slaughter alternative to a minimum management alternative and also a preferred alternative. During public comment period, received over 67,000 correspondence with 200,000 comments on the various aspects of the alternatives. The conclusion from those comments is by in large no one liked the preferred alternative. Also included were several alternatives by individuals & groups. Since this spring have been working with Montana and federal agencies to develop a modified preferred alternative based on the public comment, new information, and concerns raised by Montana and federal agencies. Attempt a modified preferred alternative for the final EIS. The federal agencies have proposed a new alternative that will address the dual goals as well as the nine objectives that had been agreed upon. Briefly the main elements are: involves a multi-staged adaptive management program over a 3 or 4 year period to minimize risk of transmission of brucellosis from bison to cattle, initiates a eradication of brucellosis in the bison herd through a vaccination program, decreases the circumstances requiring the killing of bison, and maintains a free ranging bison population. Long term objectives: the parks service along with Montana would initiate vaccination of bison initially outside of the park and the park would initiate a vaccination program for bison inside the park as soon as the safety of the vaccine is known. Involves a long-term commitment of both resources and funding. Would involve vaccination of cattle that are utilizing areas where bison might be during the winter. APHIS must commit to assist Montana. Has the long-term goal of eradication of brucellois in the bison population. Short Term aspects: focuses on risk management to insure that Montana maintains class free status accomplished through use of spatial separation, limit on bison population, limits on movement and distribution, and removal of some bison under a modified rule set. Limits the capture, test and slaughter to

those actions necessary to achieve objectives. The federal agencies have reached an impasse with the State of Montana on the preferred alternative. Conducted under an MOU. Have notified Montana that they are withdrawing from MOU that establishes the joint lead responsibilities for preparation of the EIS. Does not mean the end of the EIS process. It is a procedural step to facilitate completion of the final EIS. Will continue with analysis of the alternatives that have been proposed. Will go ahead with preparation of the final EIS for presentation to the public and the decision makers to move this planning process to the next stage. Anticipate that will happen sometime this summer/fall of 2000. Have copies of the letter sent to the Governor from the federal agency heads as well as a detailed description of the proposal for distribution.

Pat Flowers – How is Montana going to respond? We received it yesterday. The Governor has been directly involved with negotiations and at this point is evaluating what Montana's options are.

Bob Hillman – Without having a chance to read this there's not much way we can make realistic comments to it. We can all say that we are very disappointed that it comes to this type of an action on a process that's been very long and arduous.

Jim Logan- Suggest it be put on as agenda item for tomorrow under new business after everyone has an opportunity to read it.

Bob Hillman – Would be appropriate to put it on the table and revisit it if there are questions or comments after people have had a chance to look at it.

Lloyd Dorsey – Could Wayne reiterate about proposed vaccination of buffalo and whether or not that was inside the boundaries of YNP.

Wayne Brewster – The details are in the letter in the alternative. It would be a staged process as information came on line. Starting with vaccination of any calves that were captured in the chutes either at the park service facility at Stevens Creek or West Yellowstone as soon as receive safety information is available. West Yellowstone area outside of park has the remote delivery system. Does involve the vaccination of bison remotely within the park starting with calfhood vaccination.

Bob Hillman- I assume this is a legal action so would we assume that there would be a legal remedy to this action?

Wayne Brewster- The MOU was established in the early 80s. That MOU had a provision that you can terminate the MOU with 30 days notice to the other party. This has been filed with the court in Helena. It's a procedural step that will change the relationship as joint lead agencies. Does not rule out the continued working with Montana on bison management. Felt it was necessary to take this step to facilitate completion of the EIS.

Michael Scott- Need to protect Montana's free status. How does this plan protect Montana? Is APHIS making promises to the state? Montana could be embargoed by other states.

Wayne Brewster- It is important to remember we are in the middle of a public planning decision-making process. Several things that have been included are financial assistance of testing cattle and vaccinating cattle. There will be both spatial and temporal separation of bison and cattle. It adequately protects Montana's class free status.

Jeanne-Marie Souvigney - Is it the case that all federal agencies will continue in EIS process. Does this in any way affect implementation of the existing interim plan or development of future interim plans?

Wayne Brewster- all three agencies (Forest Service, APHIS, and Interior) will be joint lead in developing and producing the final EIS. The agreement on the interim plan has been adjusted over the years. In November met with Montana and went over the procedures to implement that in the field. Last week sent copy-defining procedures with no major changes.

Steve Torbitt- Would like to point out that APHIS would not be alone in assisting cattle producers of Montana. Informed all 50 state Veterinarians that the National Wildlife Federation would seriously evaluate any sanctions and assist. Will also defend marketability of cattle. Will put resources to the max to make sure that a solution proceeds on this. Vaccination was mentioned in new proposal. Are there any details or commitment from APHIS to insure all the cattle in a conflict area are all vaccinated for brucellosis?

Wayne Brewster- In discussions with Montana most producers in this area already vaccinate. At this time it is not a mandatory vaccination. Governor offered to assess the voluntary compliance for a year or so and then require vaccination of cattle that use areas bison use.

Bob Hillman- Under what legal authority can APHIS dictate to a state that that state cannot take adequate measures to protect itself? There is nothing in the Brucellosis rules, USDA rules, nor in the UM&R that would provide that authority.

Wayne Brewster-Will outline that in final EIS.

Tom Thorne- This came about due to an impasse. Can you tell us about what that impasse is or was?

Wayne Brewster- It is well detailed in letter that was sent out.

Bob Hillman- Since several members are absent will make it available for discussion again in the morning if there's a need to.

Update on Fund for Animals vs Clark

Tom Thorne- This lawsuit is against the bison hunt in Jackson Hole, Wyoming, especially on the national elk refuge. Forest Service precluded bison hunts on National Forest land also. The state of Wyoming with the support of the Wildlife Federation appealed the lawsuit. Judge ruled that forest service could not close hunt. Forest service rescinded and within a few days initiated a hunt for bison on forestlands. Only 12 bison have been harvested. Two to four hunters are drawn off a huge priority list at a time and have to go through an orientation. They are restricted on where they can hunt and have a limited time to hunt. Brucellosis samples were collected. Hunting will not control the population increase.

Lloyd Dorsey- The herd is at about 500 head. Calf crop will be 80-90 animals. The herd objective for the Jackson Bison herd is 400 animals over 5 years. Hope buffalo will get out on public lands where they are considered a game animal so hunters can harvest. Hunting season not over yet. Might be more opportunity.

Tom Thorne- Closure on forestlands is a winter range closure to protect wintering wildlife. Did not want to rescind closure.

Jim Logan- What was the sero-positivity rate on the bison tested?

Terry Kreeger- It has not been completed yet but they were all cultured negative.

Update on Wyoming vs U.S.

Tom Thorne- It is over the vaccination of elk on the wildlife elk refuge. Judge ruled against Wyoming on several accounts. Wyoming appealed a couple weeks ago on all counts. Will be lucky if hear anything any quicker than 6 months. Judges may throw out or ask for a hearing.

Jim Logan- It's important for people to realize it was the same judge in both cases.

Update on Tri-State Cattle Brucellosis

Jim Logan- Last meeting mentioned a Tri-state Brucellosis surveillance coalition meeting held in Dubois in June 1999. Had a follow-up meeting at USAHA, October 1999. Among things on the agenda was to get APHIS's advice on surveillance, what things were needed that the three states weren't doing. This effort pertains to livestock in Montana, Idaho, and Wyoming. Discussed epidemiology, reimbursement to producers, numbers of test eligible cattle vaccinated and tested, and imports/exports. One agenda item was to define exposure and adult vaccination. Primary purpose was to discuss brucellosis surveillance and prevention in tri-state area pertaining to livestock. They are at risk of loss of marketability both interstate and internationally. Expense of vaccinating and testing cattle was determined could be an average of \$10-12/per head. As to what constitutes exposure, the GYIBC uses the definition for exposure of contact or potential contact with infected elk or bison during the time those animals could transmit brucellosis. Need to concentrate on preventive measures. All three states feel headway is being made. Nearly all if not all heifers in greater Yellowstone area in the three states are already calfhood vaccinated.

Bob Hillman- One comment. Even after discussions people from other states very strongly questioned what we were doing and were wondering if they shouldn't be testing our cattle anyway. Even though we are doing all the things that are happening, as GYIBC and each agency to address the wildlife brucellosis problem and risks associated with it, there is a very strong feeling among the folks that are responsible for disease control in those states that their first obligation is to protect their industries. It is a very strong statement that we've got a big battle ahead of us to convince the other states that what we are doing is enough.

Jim Logan- There are factors outside this room (namely the other 47 state veterinarians) that can pull strings against us based on perception of the problem. Requirements will come from other states and that is what we will have to deal with.

Bob Hillman- There is a GAO report to congressional requesters titled "Wildlife Management, negotiations on a long term plan for managing Yellowstone Bison still ongoing". It is available on the web. In part it evaluates other alternatives. Some may be interested in it.

Wayne Brewster- A 30 second summary. The General Accounting office was asked to do a review of the EIS planning process and the economic analysis that was used in the preferred alternative. The GAO gave the EIS a C+. Have started gathering information for deficiencies in the draft. No strong recommendations from the report.

Karen Kovacs– For the record, this report was at the request of several members of congress.

Bob Hillman- Any further items of old business?

NEW BUSINESS

Technical & Research Subcommittee Reports

Terry Kreeger- Report presented explaining what role of CVB was in licensing commercial vaccines. Decided as a group, after some discussion, that could not utilize services at this time.

Based on the strategic plan there might be potential research funding available at some time. Discussed whether to develop a framework regarding how to prioritize. Decided we are getting ahead of ourselves. Ask Executive Committee if working group should be formed to develop a framework to define how to seek proposals, prioritize research, have a peer review system in place, and how to allocate the funding.

Bill Daniels- The better prepared when funding received the better off we will be. Very good approach. Support putting group together and putting some requirements together for research priorities.

Rube Harrington- I agree. It is a good idea.

Wayne Brewster- Is there current language or expectations for funding in the near future?

Bob Hillman- \$500,000 went to Montana State for research. But none of the rest of the funds that were allocated has research component. I don't know what the \$500,000 was to be utilized for. The other we have. None of it's allocated for research so it is outside what we are discussing at this point. Senator Craig wrote into the record "The Committee saw fit to allocate \$610,000 for the continuation of federal/state and private actions aimed at eliminating Brucellosis from wildlife in the Greater Yellowstone area". To clarify how this money is to be allocated, \$400,000 is for the states of Idaho, Wyoming, and Montana to participate in the GYIBC with the understanding that 50% goes to the state that chairs the committee and 25% goes to each of the other states. The remaining \$210,000 is for the State of Idaho, to protect the states brucellosis free status and implement the Idaho Wildlife brucellosis plan. Is it the intent of the Committee to use these funds as I have described? Mr. Cochrane, the Chairman says yes. That is the \$610,000. In addition to that \$750,000 that was to go to Montana for a quarantine facility and for bison brucellosis activities, \$500,000 to go to Montana State for some form of brucellosis research. I do not know what that is. We have three members missing, before we vote on that item I would like to postpone until in the morning. It would be wise to have some mechanism in place to prioritize research, have some review process and prioritize budget items.

Bill Daniels & Rube Harrington agreed.

Pat Flowers- How much work will it be to put this together? How much time and how many people will be involved?

Terry Kreeger- Four people will be involved. No idea how many hours. Hope to have a draft framework by next meeting.

Pat Flowers - How imminent is the funding? Hate to spend time unless we feel pretty certain that we will get this funded.

Bob Hillman- The intent of the strategic planning process was to try and have the plan and budget complete to submit by the first of the year. October, next year would be the earliest that monies would be available.

Rube Harrington- If you have something to present you're not going to get any dollars.

Pat Flowers – You would see this process as being part of the proposal presented to congress?

Lon Kuck –I fully support the concept. I'm concerned about research and divvying up money for their own research.

Wayne Brewster- It would be an independent peer review.

Tom Roffe- There is a little miscommunication here. We have sub-committees that are looking at each of the segments of research, will be talking about what has and will be done, future research needs and prioritize research. What Terry is talking about is an internal mechanism for handling research dollars that come to the GYIBC. What type of review process, how do we award dollars, etc. It is not a slam-dunk. Should time be spent now? Could be a year and a half from now.

Tom Thorne- Should start on this. Not high priorities but move forward. It will be easier to sell to congress if we can demonstrate we do have a mechanism by which you would allocate that research part of the package and demonstrate your progressing towards having it by next October. It would be worthwhile.

Wayne Brewster- It's a legitimate question. As far as the strategic plan and budget request it's a more realistic expectation that you would have consideration in the 2002 budget. Unless everyone takes lessons from Dr. Hillman on how to fair quite well apparently in the budget process. The things that are going to be difficult is how do you moderate the feeding frenzy when funding becomes available. Have been working for some time to identify research needs and some sort of sorting on priorities. Do you request proposals? This is the process that will have to be struggled through. Not just on research but the whole funding package, if it comes.

Bob Hillman- Is this something we need to vote on or just ask the Technical Subcommittee to go ahead and begin development of a process as described to report at the next meeting.

Wayne Brewster- We start that process but let's not fast track it and bump other things out until we get a little clearer picture of the direction.

Jim Logan- How specific do we need to be for the purposes of submitting a budget as to where funds would be allocated or can it be done in generalities?

Bob Hillman- We don't want to change the format we have in the proposed strategic plan. This is how much research we need or money we need and it is going to be for these listed items without prioritizing. If we go beyond that we are probably premature.

Bill Daniels- At some point we need to establish when we might be looking at a draft. We will need meetings to review and make decisions on procedures and process.

Terry Kreeger- My working group consists of myself, Rolfe, Plum & Olson. Another item we had was a small talk on research update on bison calving patterns in Yellowstone National Park. Most calving occurs in May. At the last meeting we answered one of the research action items in the GYIBC strategic plan that says prepare summaries of past, current and needed research or projects along with known estimated time lines. Have formed seven working groups. Some are almost complete, some have barely begun. By next meeting will have final drafts of research summaries. It is pretty interesting how much research has occurred and how much is ongoing. This will help in research priority process.

INFORMATION & EDUCATION SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS

Tom Thorne- We only had 4 official members there. Encourage agencies to appoint somebody and have them be active. We talked about the GYIBC video, newsletter, news clips, the information action plan and web site.

The GYIBC video was started many years ago. It was agreed that it was worth doing. The script was developed by Diane and reviewed by the Executive Committee over a long period of time. We presented it at the last meeting. Many people had heartburn with one part of it or another. A small working group of I&E and Technical Committee members proposed some changes, which will be incorporated into the video if possible. Will hopefully be presented as a final project at next meeting. The section of bison being shot at the beginning is going to be deleted. Will solve 90% of the problems people had with the video. Will change some of the controversial type verbiage. Proposed a change pertaining to bison being shot. Will change to say they were removed. Will take changes back to see if verbiage will fit video as it. The only exception being the removal in the beginning section where bison are being shot.

The newsletter has been put together. The final product looks professional and presents message we are trying to do. Keeping broad in spectrum. Kinkos printed it for us. Game & fish would buy them and sell them to each agency at cost for distribution to each agencies own mailing list. Had 2,000 printed this time. The cost is still not known but will be about \$1.25 (includes printing, folding, and tabbing for mailing). Can save cost using less quality but not recommended at this time. Please contact Becky to get what you have requested to save on postage.

Wayne Brewster- A suggestion on the return address. Consider putting Chairman, GYIBC, after Bob Hillmans name.

Bob Hillman- Will Becky send an invoice?

Tom Thorne- Yes, it has been set up so an invoice will be sent.

Rube Harrington- The group put out a very good newsletter.

Tom Thorne- For the next issue would like to devote to agency perspectives as to why they participate in the GYIBC and round off with a research topic. Some thought it would not be appropriate. Would like some direction from executive committee.

Bill Daniels- It is an excellent idea as a follow to the initial printing. Explain why agencies get involved and have an interest in this issue without getting controversial. It is important for the public to know.

Jim Logan- It's an essential thing that people that read these understand why each agency has a stake in it.

Wayne Brewster- I would propose that we think carefully on that as to what the purpose of what the newsletter is. It was to be an information newsletter and close to a purpose but have a disclaimer that it would be presenting factual information. Would propose that just put out information and allow people draw their own conclusions. Not to group by presumed point of view. Have each member agency describe what their role, responsibilities and goals would be. It is important that GYIBC be an information source to the public. May want to put names in a hat and draw the order people will write the articles and describe their agencies roles and responsibilities rather than positional statements.

Tom Thorne- Would have to spread over several issues and mix in one or two technical articles on research or something else to provide diversity.

Rube Harrington- Maybe we need to think about it more. It is a good idea. But the important thing is GYIBC not talk about us.

Bill Daniels- We should do by agency. People would be interested in reading why each agency is involved and what our interest is here. Should be put out as public information and soon so they know what our interests are.

Tom Thorne- It may take up to three issues to do that. It keeps everyone committed.

Pat Flowers - Is the purpose to educate the public? If I were the public I would be more interested in the status of the issue and the progress being made rather than why agencies are involved.

Wayne Brewster- As an example if we do this. Suggest a lottery or do alphabetical and put a couple out in each issue but bulk of the content of the newsletter be saying what we are accomplishing. The Parks would be very short section on what our role is and would dedicate more to what we are doing rather than why we are here.

Tom Thorne- That is what I had in mind. At least half or two-thirds of the issue devoted to what we are doing such as research report and the other third agency articles. Would try to get a balance between state and federal.

Jim Logan- Would like to look at this from the perspective of the public that probably really is a bit confused on this. For instance, may ask why are livestock people or the BLM concerned about what goes on in the park. It is real important for the public to know why we are involved and what progress we have made.

Bill Daniels- It is an important purpose in putting out something like this that we talk about successes and what has been accomplished. To set stage, need to know why the various agencies are involved. Long term emphasizes what are we accomplishing?

Mike Philo- It presents to the readers the different sets of goals by the stakeholders. They can see where the conflicts are and why the committee was formed.

Wayne Brewster- In reviewing this issue there are 6 articles. All of them say why everyone is working on it. The purpose is covered in all of these articles. Can't agree that there are exclusive goals and missions. It is a common goal.

Tom Roffe- There are differences in our perspectives, goals and missions. People don't understand why it is so slow.

Tom Thorne- If members of the public are interested let nearest agency know so they can get on the mailing list. Other topics identified were status of Yellowstone bison park population, Yellowstone bison study, serology in non-feedground elk in GYA, current Wyoming elk vaccine research, Wyoming habitat enhancement projects, and Idaho elk brucellosis situation. I will make some assignments. Still have time before next addition.

Bob Hillman- Just a recap of where discussion went. Rather than agency perspectives, more agency roles and responsibilities. I would prefer somehow a balance of two agencies perhaps two articles in each one and emphasizes on other types of articles. Is that the consensus of the group?

Tom Thorne- If that is okay we will move ahead with that. Did not receive very many news clips. Encourage everyone to send newsworthy articles that should be included. Missing national stuff. To make it work need to send things to include. In the future it will have GYIBC letterhead.

Information action plan was developed in May 1997. It is a very ambitious project. Many of the things identified that needed to be done are being done. Under goal a, objectives 8 and 11 could be addressed easily. Need informational paper on brucellosis as a zoonotic disease for a hunter education group. Can use material already published and put into a brochure. Can be used for other purposes besides hunter education also. Make the newsletter available to state and regional publications. Offer to provide material and ask to publish in their newspapers without making any changes. Have asked members of subcommittees to provide names of editors of publications who might be willing to do that.

Bill Daniels- Larry Dove helped to rework our format for web pages that we have which will see today.

Tom Bills- The home page currently has a menu and table of contents of what the site has to offer. It has a flash page which grabs attention quickly without having to scroll much. Used simple menus.

Larry Dove- A website is where people can look for information. To get people interested needs to be brief, eye catching, and have links. Competing with other web sights. Graphics draw attention. Tried to keep the same but updated.

Tom Bills – Do we want to change the home page to a one screen? Keep it simple and have goals, mission and objectives as a link. Use jazzier titles and a prettier front page.

Tom Thorne- Tom Bills will take over from Larry Dove as his replacement. See an opportunity to jazz up. Should goals, mission and objectives be on first page or later?

Larry Dove- Could state on first page but put as a later link.

Bob Hillman – With jazzing up can still maintain site?

Tom Bills- Management would not a problem.

Bob Hillman – Consensus I heard is to go ahead and have it done and bring back next time.

Wayne Brewster- Can put newsletter on web so people can download and print.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Steve Torbitt- In the process of gaining general tax revenues to operate GYIBC it makes it more public. May have another statement tomorrow on EIS. Disappointed but not surprised.

Lloyd Dorsey - Would like committee to know that Wyoming Wildlife Federation worked hard to get the buffalo hunt reinstated. Hope committee realizes that hunting big game animals is an important piece of the puzzle in solving the brucellosis controversy throughout the region. Hope that buffalo management in Wyoming may serve as a model for management of other herds in the future. Would like to get hunting back on other suitable lands also. Twelve buffalo were harvested out of eighteen people that had buffalo licenses. They were called four at a time, some were resident, and some were not. It was a lottery priority list. If a resident you paid \$275 to hunt for 6 days. Non- resident paid \$1,688. Not many people declined. The licenses are very sought after. Not a once in a lifetime opportunity in Wyoming. All felt it was a magnificent experience.

Bob Hillman – Next meeting will be in Jackson the week of May 8th. Plan on same schedule as this meeting.

REPORT ON BISON MANAGEMENT PLAN

Dan Huff- Fish & Wildlife Service and Parks Service so far are in early stages of management plan for bison and elk in the Jackson area. The study area will include the range of herd units that use the feed grounds. Will be looking at both bison and elk and all the issues that are directly affected by bison and elk management. Looking to start that project sometime this winter and continue for about three years based on the revised task directive presented to Assistant Secretary Barry back in June. Funding has been secured based on numbers in task directive. Looking at a very extensive public involvement. It is to be done under a plan that is under development right now and will require an MOU with all agencies involved. It will include some sort of process for conflict resolution all along the way and some directions that will help bring consensus together. The next meeting of the people involved right now would be a planning meeting the week of 17th of January in Jackson. Hope to get close to our final revised task directive.

Lloyd Dorsey- How did it get the title elk and bison management plan? Explain transition.

Dan Huff- The ideas suggested today are not final. They are under negotiation. The way it got formulated was one; we had Jackson Bison long-term management plan and EA. Of course we got sued over it. The judge ruled that the feds could not destroy any bison under that plan until additional nepa was done. Combine that need and the need for an elk management plan for the national elk refuge updating the plans that were already in effect and the need for overall comprehensive conservation plan for the refuge and put those needs together into one project that will take care of both of those. It will not look just at the feeding program but look at elk management in general.

Lloyd Dorsey- Seems like this is a moving target. Mentioned three state feed grounds. Hope that the State of Wyoming and the Wyoming Game & Fish Dept will be intrugal players in this.

Dan Huff- I will make it clear Wyoming has a big role in this plan and has included them. John Baughman is very supportive with the project.

Steve Torbitt- What is the involvement relationship of the forest service?

Dan Huff- I don't know if it will be a cooperator or joint lead. Not confirmed from forest supervisor or the regional forestry yet. They will dedicate staff and be represented.

Steve Torbitt- What is the goal?

Dan Huff- Goal is to have a management plan that is implementable and agreeable by the state and federal agencies.

Steve Torbitt- Would encourage that public involvement at every stage is critical. Don't let it drag on and on.

Skip Ladd- This whole period of time for the next 10 months will be important in bringing out the issues and defining the geographic area and what the ultimate goal should be.

OPEN DISCUSSION ON THE NOTICE OF WITHDRAWAL

Arnold Gertonson- Read letter from State of Montana about disappointment about the withdrawal.

Skip Ladd- I apologize for not being here yesterday when that was discussed. The decision did not come easy. It was discussed at great length among several different federal agencies including the Dept of Justice. What appeared to the Dept of Interior and Agriculture was that we were at an impasse so in order to move forward with the process the decision was made to withdraw. Invite the state or anyone else who has a way or approach to solve those remaining technical issues, will be more than glad to discuss those. It's not a total disengagement from the MOU or the process. It's been a tuff issue to deal with. Being new with the park service I had to say I am disappointed that it got to this point but felt there needed to be some action to allow us to move forward.

Jim Logan- I read through the letter and tried to be objective. I'm looking through livestock tainted eyes. I have a concern that other state veterinarians are going to not be impressed with the disease control that this offers. I also have concerns that APHIS would sign off on something like this after 50 years of a program that almost has brucellosis wiped out. The disease control issue really sticks out. I'm concerned APHIS has signed off on this and the people who signed off on it may not be familiar with the brucellosis program. In several places it says we are committed to this and this and this but are concerned about the commitment to disease control. The vaccination program will be fine but by itself won't get the job done. Letting untested animals out of park is going to be a big red flag to other state veterinarians. It will fuel the fires of perception. From the livestock standpoint Montana is being pushed into a corner.

Dan Huff- Did anybody provide a synopsis of what the breaking point was, what the issues were that could not be resolved?

Bob Hillman – Wayne did that.

Wayne Brewster- It is detailed in the letter. I would encourage anybody to read the proposal and not just the letter. It is a process question. The settlement agreement has a continuing jurisdiction provision. It is a procedural step. Will be asking the court to dismiss the suit but the planning process goes on. There is considerable disease management in the proposal. There are extreme risk management procedures in the proposal.

Dan Huff- On comment about untested bison roaming around I have to point out we have 120,000 untested elk roaming around in Wyoming.

Bob Hillman- I did read the proposal last night. I am disappointed and discouraged. It puts a large share of the workload and responsibilities on Montana. Even though there is a statement that there is a commitment to disease control in the park, it's not written into that draft. Vaccination is not much of a commitment for disease control. Need to whole herd vaccinate. You can do that under adapted management. Is that what we expect when you come to Idaho?

Steve Torbitt- The National Wildlife Federation is disappointed also. Need a unified decision on jurisdictions across the park. Have asked for comments from Governors office. Montana wants to continue to operate under the interim plan. I was not shocked yesterday. These are wild animals that belong to the public. This is not a dairy or beef herd. You have to factor those things in. Does disease eradication program apply to wildlife? Everyone wants a cooperative solution.

Arnold Gertonson- Do not want CWD to be able to transmit from wildlife to domestic livestock.

Steve Torbitt- We are opposed to game farms. Talking species to species and there has not been a documented case of wild buffalo giving any kind of brucellosis to the cattle.

Bob Hillman- I would like to remind you that there have been other public bison herds in which brucellosis has been eradicated.

Rob Hendry – I'm here to speak for the agriculture industry. None of us knew that anything like this was coming down. The whole burden is put on the livestock industry. It says that in the event cattle herd was to contract brucellosis the agency would follow established APHIS procedure so that Montana's class free status is not jeopardized. That's call depopulation. Yet we have a bison herd in this country and possible an elk herd with no management. The plan does talk about vaccination and procedures, but the key word is until we have a safe data and once a remote delivery mechanism is available, these are stall tactics. It looks like their telling Montana to take their toys and go home. Trouble is we are home. The issue is a disease that affects wildlife in this country. I am real disappointed that the groups can't work together to reach a solution.

DISCUSSION OF DRAFT STRATEGIC PLAN & BUDGET

Discussions and modifications were made to the draft strategic plan and budget. A final plan was approved.

REVIEW DRAFT COVER LETTER

Discussions and modifications were made to the cover letter being sent to the governors and secretaries. The final version was agreed upon._

Bob Hillman- What other distribution should there be and how should we do it? It needs to go to the congressional delegations.

Dan Huff- Each of the states can do their congressional delegation.

Bob Hillman- Do we want to post it on the GYIBC web page?

Larry Dove- Might want to give a week for Governors to see and then post it since it is a freedom of information once it is signed.

Bob Hillman – Is everyone comfortable with that?

All agreed.

Bill Daniels- For your information BLM is working toward a new resource management plan for some 2,000 acres and about 10 different parcels along the Snake River to the south of Jackson over the next year. There will be some public issues that will crop up. We have at least one feed ground involved that is administered by the Game & Fish Department. There will be some interaction that will need to occur between the agencies. This is just for your information.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Rob Hendry- We're a little off the issue of the Federal agencies pulling out of MOU but there are a couple of things that I would like to convey. In the letter to Governor Roscoe I think a lot were brought up that you were talking about unresolved issues. It brings up some other unresolved issues. Grizzly bears was brought up and the importance of having a big bison herd to feed grizzly bears. It is an endangered species that is an unresolvable issue. Wyoming just went through some really stringent testing requirements because of other states talked about sanctions against Wyoming cattle. Where was APHIS when Wyoming was going through that? One of the things that will never be resolved is the fact that it mentions that bison would have vaginal radio telemetry. That is putting bison through a chute and working them like cattle. In calls from Governors office this morning he is very concerned and that office is very concerned, they are tired of regulation by bureaucrats in Washington and by this administration. In their eyes, by these actions, we are no longer speaking with one voice. It is the cavalier disregard of the states authority and jurisdiction over these issues and other issues. The removal of the states authority to resolve these issues by the unilateral action of withdrawing from the MOU with Montana you have basically emptied the tool box to resolve these issues, and we have quit using sound science and started using political science. The Governors office is very concerned about the far-reaching implications to the Jackson Hole elk and bison EIS. They asked to convey that and their concern as well as the livestock industry in Wyoming. Jackson is going to be the same pattern as Yellowstone.

Meeting adjourned.

